

Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey
Department of History
Spring 1999

History 512:391:01 World War II: Oral History Field Work
Scott Hall 221, Wednesdays 9:50 a.m.-1:10 p.m.

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World War II

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This course is challenging and will give you the opportunity to create an enduring historical source that will be deposited in Special Collections and University Archives and placed on the World Wide Web for future generations of scholars and students. The Department of History, Alexander Library, Special Collections and University Archives, and the Rutgers College Classes of 1942, 1940, 1941, 1943, 1944, 1947, 1948, and 1949 and Mr. Carl Meyer, Class of 1925, are sponsoring an oral history of World War II centering around the experiences of Rutgers College and Douglass College alumni. Not only will this course lead to an expanded understanding of American society in the 1930s and 1940s, it will help foster a deeper appreciation of the history and traditions of Rutgers University.

Each participant in this course will undertake a great deal of reading, write several essay assignments, and forge lasting historical documents. A central part of this project will be conducting your own oral history interview and transcribing it.

Course participants will be expected to purchase the following books from the Rutgers University bookstore:

Stephen E. Ambrose, Citizen Soldier: The U.S. Army from the Normandy Beaches to the Bulge to the Surrender of Germany, June 7, 1945-May 7, 1945 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997).

Lewis H. Carlson, We Were Each Other's Prisoners: An Oral History of World War II American and German Prisoners of War. (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

Lewis A. Ezenberg and Susan E. Hirsch, eds., The War in

American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Donald A. Ritchie. Doing Oral History. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995).

Paul Stillwell, The Golden Thirteen: Recollections of the First Black Naval Officers (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1993).

William M. Tuttle "Daddy's Gone To War:" The Second World War in the Lives of America's Children. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Other readings for the course (marked with an asterisk* in the schedule of required readings and assignments) will be available on reserve in the History Department.

SCHEDULE OF REQUIRED READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

January 20	Introduction
January 27	Oral History: An Overview Ritchie, <u>Doing Oral History</u> , entire
February 3	Preparing for an Interview Tom Frusciano, University Archivist MEET AT SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES, BASEMENT LEVEL, ALEXANDER LIBRARY
February 10	The Soldier's War <u>FIRST ASSIGNMENT DUE</u>
February 17	The Army's War I. Roland Winter Interview at: http://history.rutgers.edu II. Group Interview: Frank Dauster, Rutgers College Class of 1949
February 24	History Through Memoirs and the Spoken Word: The Naval War from Below and Above Deck. <u>SECOND ASSIGNMENT DUE</u>
March 3	The "Good War" and American Society; Women and WWII Erenberg, <u>War in American Culture</u> , Parts 1 and 2
March 10	Oral Reports

THIRD ASSIGNMENT DUE

March 17 SPRING BREAK...YAHOO!

March 24 The Prisoner's War
Carlson, We Were Each Other's Prisoners,
entire
Robert C. King Interview at:
<http://history.rutgers.edu>

March 31 Special Guest: Tom Kindre, Rutgers
College Class of 1942...

April 7 The Army Air Corps' War
Chester Szarawarski Interview at:
<http://history.rutgers.edu>
FIRST TRANSCRIPT DUE!!!

April 14 The Homefront War
Tuttle, "Daddy's Gone to War." entire

April 21 Coming Home and Staying Home
<http://history.rutgers.edu>
Interviews by Jean Comeforo and Bert
Manhoff at:
<http://history.rutgers.edu>

April 28 PARTY!!! SECOND TRANSCRIPT DUE

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

ASSIGNMENT ONE

Why did the Americans win the Battle for Europe in 1944 and 1945? In the following five to seven page paper, address this question by critiquing Stephen E. Ambrose's Citizen Soldier: The U.S. Army from the Normandy Beaches to the Bulge to the Surrender of Germany, June 7, 1945-May 7, 1945 (1997). Do you agree with Ambrose's thesis regarding the abilities of the "average" serviceman and his leaders? What other factors does he view as essential to the Allied victory in the Western Front?

In your analysis of Ambrose, also consider the arguments of Martin van Creveld's Fighting Power: German and U.S. Army Performance, 1939-1945 (Westport, Ct: Greenwood Press, 1982), pages 127-169 regarding the relative abilities of the German and American armies. By relying on oral history accounts as his principle source of evidence, does Ambrose offer a far more

optimistic view regarding the American military's successes in the Second World War?

ASSIGNMENT TWO

What was it like to serve in the U.S. Navy during the Second World War? What were the duties, attitudes, concerns, fears, and hopes of those who served in this branch of the service? How did the experiences of the common sailor differ from those of the officer? How did the experiences of a black naval officer differ from those of his white counterpart? What customs, mores, and policies typified the navy during World War II? How did service in the U.S. Navy influence the veterans' postwar lives?

In this assignment each course member is to address these questions in a five to eight page essay that is based on Paul Stillwell's The Golden Thirteen: Recollections of the First Black Naval Officers and the transcripts of the interviews of John A. Melrose, Richard J. Mercer, and Alfred Nisonoff available on the Internet at <http://history.rutgers.edu>. Your essay should not simply summarize the lives of Melrose, Mercer, and Nisonoff and the officers interviewed by Stillwell, but seek to analyze the common experiences of the "typical" sailor and junior naval officer during the Second World War.

ASSIGNMENT THREE

What was Rutgers like in the 1930s and 1940s? For this assignment, each member of the seminar will review one semester of the Rutgers Targum or the New Jersey College for Women Caellian/Campus News from these years and write an eight to ten page essay (typed, double spaced) based on what he/she has learned from them. A good essay will summarize the key events and activities that occurred at Rutgers during the span of time assigned by the project director. Attention should be paid to how the Targum or Caellian reported news dealing with New Brunswick, New Jersey, and overseas developments relating to World War II. Newspaper editorials and letters to the editor can offer insights into the attitudes of Rutgers students towards events of the period.

Each member of the course will be asked to give a five minute presentation in front of the class summarizing his or her written report and highlighting the key themes of Rutgers life during this important era. You should prepare and practice your presentation to ensure it does not go above the allotted time.

PAPER STYLE, FORMAT, AND EVALUATION

*Before submitting your final paper, be sure to carefully proofread it for grammar, spelling, and organization.

*Papers should be typed, double spaced, with one inch margins (left, right, top, and bottom)

*Except for the title page, each individual page should be numbered consecutively.

*Make sure that your footnotes or endnotes conform to the style set out in: Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for the Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations.

Papers using parenthetical forms of citation will not be accepted.

*Each paper will be graded on the basis of research, conceptualization, analysis, and presentation.

TRANSCRIBING AN INTERVIEW

Each class member is required to transcribe one interview already completed by the Oral History Archives. The completed transcript will be permanently deposited in the Rutgers Oral History Archives of World War II. Although a laborious process, completing a typed transcript of an interview is one of the best ways an individual can learn how to conduct an interview for the Rutgers Oral History Archives.

THE TEAM INTERVIEW

Each member of the class will assist the course instructor in completing one interview. As part of this process, participants must complete the following stages:

1. Select one individual to be interviewed in consultation with the course instructor. Stop by Bishop House 308 and select an interviewee from the current files. Coordinate the scheduling with the course instructor (preferably Wednesday afternoons or Thursday at any time) and mark the interview time and date on the desk calendar. Interviews will be conducted in Van Dyck 212.
2. Conduct preliminary biographical research before each interview. The alumni file of an interviewee can be found in the University Archives and Special Collections at Alexander Library and should be reviewed. Scan the Targum for relevant articles on the interviewee. Consult secondary sources that can provide the background information necessary to ask the individual informed questions regarding his or her specific experiences in the 1930s and 1940s (i.e., towns he/she lived in, specific type of factory

ne/she worked in). A WEEK BEFORE THE INTERVIEW, MEET WITH THE COURSE INSTRUCTOR AND SUBMIT A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RELEVANT SOURCES WITH A TENTATIVE LIST OF QUESTIONS TO BE USED IN THE INTERVIEWS.

3. Conduct the interview with the course instructor. After the interview, send a thank you letter to the interviewee. A copy of your thank you note must be placed in the project archives no later than a week after an interview.

4. Transcribe the interview according to the guidelines of the Rutgers Oral History Archives of World War II.

5. Review the transcript with the course instructor or project director. SIGN A RELEASE FORM DONATING YOUR PART OF THE INTERVIEW TO RUTGERS UNIVERSITY.

Course participants will have access to recording equipment, a PC, and a transcribing machine. It is important that participants realize that many individuals will need to use this equipment. Please schedule interviews and transcribing sessions as early as possible. Individuals with cassette players and PC's at home are encouraged to transcribe at home. The diskette must be submitted to receive credit for the transcription. Transcriptions must be made only from copies of the original interviews. Never use the original tapes.

SOME COMMENTS REGARDING THE READINGS

A great deal of reading is expected for this course. Some materials must be read very closely, especially for the written assignments. Please remember that all your reading for this course is to prepare you to ask informed questions of individuals who lived through the Second World War.

YOUR GRADE

This is a rigorous course with high expectations. Participants are expected to:

1. Attend class regularly and complete reading and essay assignments.
2. Meet regularly with the course instructor.
3. Meet deadlines and keep appointments with individuals being interviewed for the project. With the assistance of the project director, conduct one interview. Complete a total of two transcripts for accession into the project archives.

4. Respect the privacy and confidentiality of all individuals interviewed by the project. Members of the class should discuss the content of interviews with individuals not associated with the project.

5. Cooperate with other members of the class.

6. Make periodic reports to the class and the course instructor regarding your progress.

The following percentages will be used in calculating your final grade:

Written Assignments and Class Discussion:	One Third
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Interview Preparation and Style:	One Third
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Quality of Transcripts:	One Third
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Finally, although grades are important, remember that you are also receiving the opportunity to create historical documents that will endure for generations.